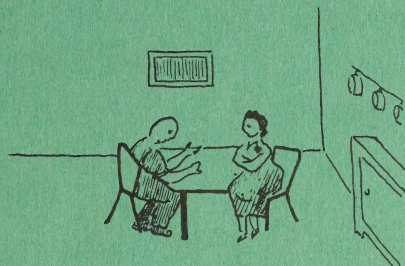
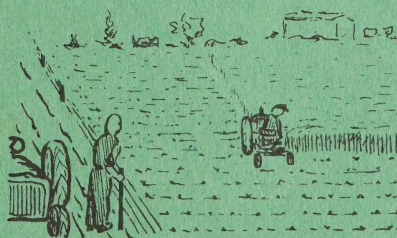
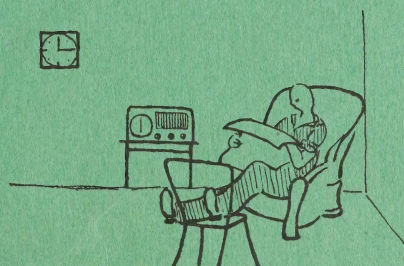


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**THE EXCHANGE OF FARMING INFORMATION**

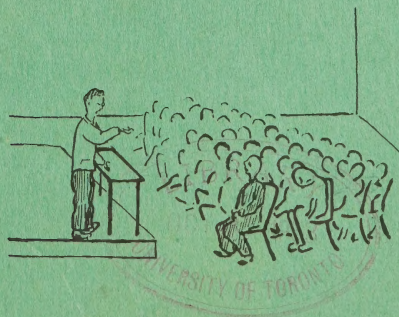


Helen C. Abell



CANADA

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Marketing Service - Economics Division  
Ottawa - August, 1953







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# THE EXCHANGE OF FARMING INFORMATION



Helen C. Abell



DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Marketing Service • Economics Division  
Ottawa, August, 1953


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## THE EXCHANGE OF FARMING INFORMATION

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## THE EXCHANGE OF FARMING INFORMATION

### PREFACE

A great deal of information and help dealing with most of the technical aspects of farming is available to the Canadian farmer. Some farmers seek and use this information. Others do not.

This information and help may reach the farmer through discussions with a district agriculturist and from many other persons, by reading published reports, by listening to the radio, by visiting the farms of other farmers or Government Experimental and Demonstration farms, by attending meetings and short courses, by seeing films and in many other ways.

This report provides some knowledge of the process by which farming information is exchanged. It does not provide any technical information on how to farm. It is primarily concerned with the farmers themselves, with the extent to which they make use of the several possible ways of obtaining farming information and the extent to which they are aware of receiving and passing on this information. It also indicates some of the external and personal characteristics of farmers who make use of various ways of obtaining farming information. The acquisition of current price information is also discussed.

It is hoped that the findings of this study will interest farmers to take still more advantage of the many ways in which they may acquire helpful farming information. It is also hoped that those persons responsible for disseminating this information will gain more insight into some of the important characteristics which are associated with farmers who choose to get their farming information in various ways.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

It would have been impossible to conduct this study without the co-operation and encouragement of many people.

Appreciation is expressed to the many farm operators and other persons who gave freely of their time during the course of the field work.

Field interviewers were K. Elgaard, B. MacDonald, J. Parfett, H. Sharp, F. Uhler, J.K. Wiens and the author.

Help in planning the study was received from senior officers of the Economics Division, Canada Department of Agriculture, in both Ottawa and Edmonton.

The cover illustration was prepared by Dr. Frank Uhler.



## INTRODUCTION

Location of the Study Areas.- This is the fourth of a series of short reports based on data which comprise a part of a larger study dealing with factors involved in the choice of alternative farm enterprises in two mixed farming <sup>1/</sup> areas of Alberta. These areas are: (1) Census sub-division number 459, Pine Lake, which lies between 45 and 75 miles south of Edmonton and extends roughly between three and 24 miles west of the city of Wetaskiwin, covering an area of about 600 square miles -- this is hereafter referred to as the Wetaskiwin area; (2) Census sub-division number 339, Bigstone, which lies between 85 to 115 miles south of Edmonton. It is adjacent to the southern and eastern limits of the city of Red Deer, and extends roughly 27 miles from east to west covering an area of about 600 square miles -- this is hereafter referred to as the Red Deer area.

The geographical location of the two study areas is shown in Figure 1. Neither area is prairie. The topography is undulating to gently rolling with some uncultivated arable land still to be found.

Reporting the Findings of this Research.- Three short reports dealing with specific phases of this larger study have been released: Report No. 1, "A Methodological Note", published in September, 1952, which describes the sampling process utilized in the study; Report No. 2, "Alberta Farm Operators and the Level of Living Concept", published in October, 1952, and Report No. 3, "Proposed Changes in Farming Enterprises", published in March, 1953. Considerable detail concerning the farming areas and the characteristics of the farm operators may be found in Report No. 3. This report on the "Exchange of Farming Information" is Report No. 4 of the series.

A fifth report, concerned with patterns of social participation and their implications, will be published at a later date.

These reports are available on request from the Economics Division, Marketing Service, Canada Department of Agriculture.

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<sup>1/</sup> As defined in the Census of the Prairie Provinces, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, Volume IV, 1946, Introduction, page xx, "Mixed Farms are farms where the revenue from two or more of the main types of products is required to produce 50 per cent or more of the gross revenue". The mixed farming nature of both of the study areas is indicated by the fact that none of the four major farming enterprises accounted for more than one-fourth of the relative economic importance of all farming enterprises. These four major enterprises were hogs, beef cattle, dairy cattle and grain (barley, oats, wheat).

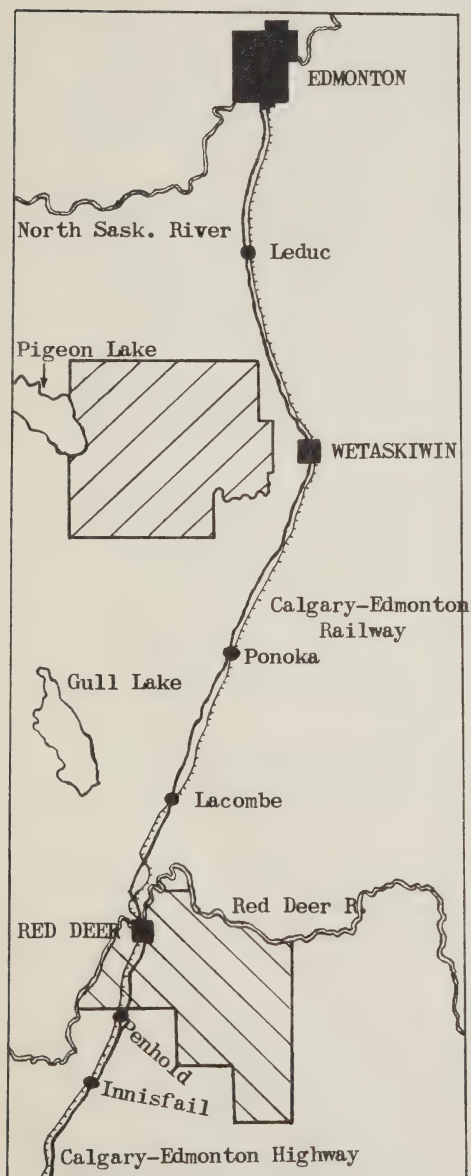
Method of Conducting the Study.- A representative sample 1/of one out of every six farm operators in each rural area was visited by a trained interviewer between June 6 and July 14, 1952. Altogether 202 interviews were recorded, 123 in the Wetaskiwin area representing the total 719 active farm operators in that area and 79 in the Red Deer area representing the total 496 active farm operators in that area.

In reporting this study, no expansion of figures from the sample to the total number of farmers in the area has been made. Proportions and percentages based on the sample of farm operators may be expected to be very similar to those which might have been found had it been practical to visit every farm operator in each rural area.

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1/ For a description of the sample design, see Report No. 1, "A Methodological Note", Helen C. Abell and B.A. MacDonald, 1952, Canada Department of Agriculture, Marketing Service, Economics Division, Ottawa, Canada.

MAP SHOWING THE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREAS



SCALE: 1 inch = 16 miles

Legend



Wetaskiwin Study Area



Red Deer Study Area





## USUAL WAYS OF GETTING FARMING INFORMATION

There is no doubt that farm operators continually may get information and new ideas about farming. Ninety-eight per cent of the 202 respondents in this study said that they make use of one or more of four main ways of usually getting farming information.

1. Talking with Other People.- All of the farmers who seek farming information (98 per cent of all respondents) make some use of this particular way of getting it. However, only a relatively small proportion (7.9 per cent) confine themselves to using merely this one way. Most of the respondents (90.1 per cent) make use of at least two or more ways of getting farming information.

The people with whom farming is discussed are most often the farmer's wife and children, his friends, neighbours and relatives, and to a lesser extent, professional agricultural workers such as the district agriculturist and the Veterans' Land Act representative.<sup>1/</sup>

2. Making Use of "Mass Media".- This term includes both printed material and the radio. Mass media are utilized by 90.1 per cent of the respondents. Printed material is used to a slightly greater extent than is the radio as a way of usually getting information and ideas about farming.

The particular type of printed material most commonly used is farm papers and magazines, then daily or weekly newspapers and, to a lesser extent, publications of government agencies, universities and grain elevator companies.

The radio programs named as most useful were those which deal specifically with farming and secondly "general radio programs" which in some cases included mention of the Farm Radio Forum.

Slightly more than one quarter (27.2 per cent) of the respondents said that they used only two ways of usually getting farming information. These two ways were, (1) talking with other people, and (2) making use of some type of mass media. More than these one or two ways of usually getting farming information are taken advantage of by 62.9 per cent of the respondents.

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<sup>1/</sup> This rank order of persons is based on a consideration of the number of times a particular type of person is mentioned as well as the relative importance of this person as a source of information as specified by the respondent. This same weighting system has been used in presenting the detailed order of usefulness of each of the four main ways of usually getting information and new ideas on farming.

3. Personal Observation of Other Farms.- Over three-fifths (62.9 per cent) of the respondents said that they usually get some information and new ideas about farming from visiting and observing other farms. The "other farms" most frequently mentioned were those of neighbours. (Three out of every four of the farmers who said that they got information from observing other farms specified that this "other farm" was that of a neighbour). Next most frequently mentioned were Government Experimental Farms, farms at agricultural schools and lastly private farms at which "field days" were held.

Slightly more than one third (35.1 per cent) of the respondents said that they used only three main ways of getting farming information. These three ways are (1) talking with other people, (2) making use of some type of mass media and (3) personally observing other farms. More than these one, two or three ways of getting information are taken advantage of by 27.8 per cent of the respondents.

4. Attending Organized Meetings.- Just slightly more than one quarter (27.8 per cent) of the farm operators said that they usually got information and new ideas about farming from attending organized meetings. Short courses were the type of organized meeting which was most often mentioned. (It is known that the Red Deer Board of Trade, with the help of local farmers and others, had conducted a short course in Red Deer prior to the spring of 1952). Almost as often mentioned as short courses were meetings held at local farms. Next were "general" farmers' meetings, then meetings of farmers' organizations (which were not generally named although a few respondents specified the "Farmer's Union"), and lastly mentioned were meetings which were held as a part of field day programs.

Although only slightly more than one-quarter of the respondents said that they usually attend organized meetings as a way of getting information and new ideas on farming, yet these people also make some use of each of the other three previously discussed ways of increasing their knowledge. Not only do they talk about farming with other people, make use of mass media, personally observe other farms but they also attend organized meetings.

The proportion of respondents making some use of each of the four main ways of getting farming information and those using only a specific number of these ways is presented in Table 1.

A definite pattern of utilization of these four main ways of usually getting farming information was found to exist:

When only one way is used, this way is talking with other people and the "other people" most often tend to be the respondent's wife and immediate family.

When two ways are used, these ways are talking with other people and using mass media. The "other people" most often tend to be the respondent's wife or other local farm operators. The mass media most often tend to be farm papers or newspapers, with some use of the radio.



Table 1.- Ways of Usually Getting Farming Information - Farm Operators in Two Mixed Farming Areas of Central Alberta, June, July, 1952

Main ways	:Farm operators who make :			:Farm operators who use only a specific number of ways of getting farming information b/		
	: some use of each of these ways	: Number a/	: Per cent a/	: some use of each of these ways	: Number : Per cent	: Per cent
(1) Talking to other people	198	98.0	(1)	Use only this one way	16	7.9
(2) Using mass media	182	90.1	(2)	Use this way as well as (1)	55	27.2
(3) Observing other farms	127	62.9	(3)	Use this way as well as (1) and (2)	71	35.1
(4) Attending meetings	56	27.8	(4)	Use this way as well as (1), (2) and (3)	56	27.8
(E) Do not usually get farming information	4	2.0	(5)	Use no way	4	2.0
			Total		202	100.0

a/ The average number of ways used by the respondents was between two and three (2.8). Thus these columns do not total 202 farmers and 100.0 per cent respectively since most farmers use more than one way of getting farming information.

b/ This part of the table is based on the use of a type of scale analysis which is used in the social sciences to determine the presence of patterns or ordered consistency. In this case, the coefficient of reproducibility is very high, being 97 out of 100. This may be interpreted as meaning that the same sort of behaviour would be expected from 97 out of 100 farm operators in similar farming areas.

When three ways are used, these ways are talking with other people, using mass media and observing other farms. The "other people" tend to be the respondent's wife, or either the district agriculturist or other local farm operators. The mass media tend to be farm papers or specific farm radio broadcasts. The farms that are observed tend to be chiefly those of other local farmers (six times out of ten) or official experimental or demonstration farms (four times out of ten).

When all four ways are used, these are talking with other people (chiefly the respondent's wife or sons, or either the district agriculturist or other local farm operators); using mass media (chiefly farm papers and newspapers but also government and university publications); observing other farms (here the emphasis is on experimental and demonstration farms, six times out of ten, and less often those of other farmers, four times out of ten); and attending meetings of farmers' organizations.

On examination of this pattern, it is readily observed that those respondents who rely on only one or two of these main ways of usually getting farming information make relatively little use of the so-called "official" sources of farming information. Those who rely on three or four of these main ways make considerably more use of official sources of information such as discussions with a local district agriculturist, reading government and university publications, listening to specific farm radio broadcasts, observation of experimental and demonstration farms and attendance at the meetings of farmers' organizations.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONS USING VARIOUS WAYS OF GETTING FARMING INFORMATION

It is readily seen that some farmers behave quite differently from others in taking advantage of available opportunities to expand their farming knowledge.

For instance, it is well known that some farmers seldom or never attend meetings even though much helpful farming information may be obtained in this way. In this study, only about one out of every four farmers said that he usually gets farming information through attendance at meetings. Why does only one out of four attend informative meetings even though all of these farm operators live in similar farming areas and carry on mixed farming operations?

One way of searching for an answer to this sort of question is to examine a selected number of characteristics or attributes of a farmer and of his farm in relation to the way or ways in which he usually obtains farming information.

An indefinite number of characteristics could be chosen and examined. However logic, common sense and a bit of luck serve as a guide in choosing the way in which the investigation should be carried out. One of the

original hypotheses of this whole study is that not only external circumstances but also human will and initiative govern a farmer's actions. Thus, it is necessary to be aware of characteristics of (A) the farm and its location, (B) the farmer as others see him and (C) the farmer's own thinking and behaviour, - all in relation to the use he makes of various ways of getting farming information.

In this manner, it is possible to gain considerable understanding and insight into some of the more important of the many possible aspects by which farmers who differ in their habitual ways of getting new ideas and information about their business of farming, may be recognized.

All of the relationships examined in this study were submitted to a statistical test to determine whether the findings were merely due to chance, or were an indication of real differences.

The test that was used is known as the chi square test. When this test showed at or above the 95 level, the findings were accepted and reported as significant. When this test showed a relationship of less than the 95 level, the findings were reported as due largely to chance alone.

#### A. Characteristics of the Farm Itself

Eight characteristics of the farm itself were each examined in relation to the number and type of ways in which the operators of these farms usually get information and new ideas on farming. These characteristics are:

- (1) Municipal area in which the farm is located.
- (2) Soil rating of the farm.
- (3) Size of the farm.
- (4) Proportion of improved land on the farm.
- (5) Number and type of income-producing enterprises on the farm.
- (6) Extent of the farm business (as measured in Productive Man Work Units).
- (7) Size of labour force (as measured in man equivalents).
- (8) Labour efficiency (which is a measure of the productive work accomplished in terms of the number of people working full or part time on the farm).

It was found that the particular municipal area in which the farms are located has no significant relation to the number and type of ways in which the operators of these farms usually get farming information. The level of significance is only ten. However, all of the other seven characteristics of the farm itself are significantly related to the way in which the operators of these farms usually get farming information. The level of significance of all of these characteristics is 95 or higher.

All of these seven characteristics of the farm itself served to differentiate between farmers who use all four ways of usually getting farming information and farmers who use less than four ways.

From Table 1 it is noted that of the 202 farmers who were interviewed, 55 (27.8 per cent) usually get farming information in four possible ways: talking with other people, making use of mass media, observing other farms, and attending meetings. The remaining 147 farmers (72.2 per cent) do not



attend meetings but do make some use of three, two, one or, in a few cases, none of the other ways of getting information.

In terms of certain characteristics of their farms, there is evidence that there are significant differences between those farmers who usually attend meetings and farmers who do not usually get information in this way.

These differences are reflected in their farms in these aspects:-

Soil rating of the farmers 1/- Of 64 respondents located on farms rated as having the highest soil rating, "excellent", 37.5 per cent of these men usually attend meetings. Of 138 respondents located on farms rated as not having excellent soil, only 23.2 per cent of these men usually attend meetings. This difference is at the 95 level of significance.

Total Size of the Farm in Acres.- Of 65 respondents whose farms included 400 or more acres of land, 40.0 per cent of these men usually attend meetings. Of 137 located on farms of less than 400 acres, only 21.9 per cent usually attend meetings. This difference is at the 99 level of significance.

Proportion of Total Acres that are Improved or Broken.- Of the 65 respondents whose farms included 400 or more acres of land, 52 of these men had less than three-quarters of their acreage improved and, of these 52 respondents, 44.2 per cent usually attend meetings. The other 13 respondents whose farms included 400 or more acres of land had more than three-quarters of their acreage improved and, of these respondents, only 23.1 per cent usually attend meetings. Among the 137 respondents who have farms of less than 400 acres, regardless of the proportion of improved acreage on their farms, only 21.9 per cent usually attend meetings. These differences are at the 99 level of significance.

Number and Type of Income-Producing Farm Enterprises 2/- Of 161 respondents who carry on four or more farm enterprises from which income is obtained, 31.7 per cent of these men usually attend meetings. Of the 41 respondents who carry on less diversified farming (three or fewer income-

- 1/ For a description of the basis for rating soils and the proportion of farms located on different soils see Report No. 3, p. 2. Soils were rated on the basis of their relative productivity in terms of grain production. The ratings ranged from "poor" to "fair" to "good" to "excellent". The average soil rating of farms in both study areas was "good".
- 2/ For a more detailed description of the number and type of income-producing farm enterprises carried on in the study areas, see report No. 3, pps. 7 and 8. When three or fewer enterprises are mentioned, these enterprises are nearly always grain, beef cattle and hogs. More than four enterprises are the three just mentioned as well as dairy cattle, poultry and either sheep or clover seed.

producing farm enterprises), only 12.2 per cent of these men usually attend meetings. This difference is at the 98 level of significance.

Extent of the Farm Business (as measured in Productive Man Work Units) 1/-  
Of 68 respondents whose farm business is considered high in Productive Man Work Units (PMWU), 41.2 per cent of these men usually attend meetings. Of 134 respondents whose farm business is considered low or medium in PMWU, only 20.9 per cent of these men usually attend meetings. This difference is at the 99 level of significance.

Size of Farm Labour Force (as measured in Man Equivalents) 2/-  
Of 134 respondents on whose farms the labour force exceeded 1.4 man equivalents, 32.8 per cent of these men usually attend meetings. Of 68 respondents on whose farms there was a smaller labour force of less than 1.4 man equivalents, only 17.6 per cent of these respondents usually attend meetings. This difference is at the 97 level of significance.

Labour Efficiency 3/- (A measure of the productive work accomplished in terms of the farm labour force).

Of 66 respondents whose farms were classified as high in terms of labour efficiency, 37.9 per cent of these men usually attend meetings. Of 136 respondents whose farms were not classified as high in terms of labour efficiency, only 22.8 per cent usually attend meetings. This difference is at the 98 level of significance.

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- 1/ For a more detailed description of Productive Man Work Units (PMWU), see report No. 3, p. 13. This measure takes into consideration the acreage of different crops and the number of different livestock per farm. Thus some farms greatly exceeded others in the extent of their farm business and so farms are classed as low in PMWU having 265 or less, medium in PMWU having 266 to 429, or as high in PMWU having more than 430.
- 2/ For a more detailed description of man equivalents, see report No. 3, p. 11. Man equivalent is a measure of the amount of human labour exercised on one farm over a 12-month period. It takes into account the number of persons working on the farm (both paid and unpaid) and the number of months worked by each person. The average man equivalent for the study areas was approximately 1.8, which may be interpreted as meaning that one person worked full time on the farm and another person worked for eight-tenths of the year.
- 3/ For a more detailed description of labour efficiency, see report No. 3, p. 10. Labour efficiency is determined when the PMWU per farm is divided by the man equivalents. Farms differed considerably in terms of labour efficiency. Those classified as low or medium in terms of labour efficiency may be considered as farms on which a large amount of human labour is expended in relation to a moderate amount of productive work accomplished. Farms classified as high in labour efficiency may be considered as farms on which the human work expended results in a correspondingly high amount of productive work accomplished.

In brief, it may be stated that seven out of eight characteristics of the farm itself serve to help identify those farm operators who make full use of all four of the main available ways of getting information. Respondents who usually get farming information by talking with other people, making use of mass media, observing other farms and attending meetings tend to operate farms which are characterized as being: On excellent soil; of 400 or more acres in size (of which 300 acres or less are improved); operated to provide four or more income-producing farm enterprises; farmed extensively (as measured in Productive Man Work Units); supporting a labour force of one full time person as well as four to five months labour from other persons; highly efficient in terms of the work accomplished for the labour expended.

These seven characteristics also serve to help identify farm operators who do not make full use of all of the four main available ways of getting farm information. Respondents who do not attend meetings but who may use three or fewer of the other ways of usually getting farming information tend to operate farms which are: on soil which is not graded as excellent; of less than 400 acres in size; supporting three or fewer income producing farm enterprises; rated as medium or low in PMWU; handled by a smaller labour force than is found on most farms (less than 1.4 man equivalents); not highly efficient in terms of the work accomplished for the labour expended.

#### B. Characteristics of the Farm Operator as Others See Him

There are several common characteristics, such as age and nationality, by which any person may be easily described and recognized by other people.

It would seem reasonable to assume that farmers who differ from one another in their usual ways of getting farming information might also differ from one another in regard to certain recognizable personal characteristics.

To test this assumption, each of the following personal characteristics was examined in relation to the main ways in which the farm operators usually get farming information.

- (1) The country in which the respondent was born. 1/
- (2) The length of time each respondent had operated the farm on which he was living when he was interviewed in the spring of 1952. 2/

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1/ For a description of the place of birth of the respondents; see report No. 3, p. 3. About three-fifths of the respondents (60.4 per cent) were born in Canada and 23.8 per cent were born in non-English-speaking countries, chiefly Poland, Russia, the Scandinavian and other countries. The remaining 15.8 per cent were born in English-speaking countries, chiefly Britain and the United States of America.

2/ The average number of years that the operators had been on their farms was 11 years.



- (3) The nature and number of the farm operator's working experiences.
- (4) The age of the farm operator.
- (5) The education of the farm operator in terms of the grades in school which had been completed.
- (6) His stage in the "family life cycle" (which considers his marital status and the presence and age of children in the home).
- (7) The presence of certain material possessions in the home (which is a measure of his level of living as determined objectively by other persons).

No evidence of a significant nature was found which would indicate a real relationship between the ways in which a farm operator usually gets farming information and (1) the country in which he was born, or (2) the length of time he had operated his farm.

The other five personal characteristics all showed certain significant associations with the ways in which the farm operators usually get farming information.

The Farm Operator's Working Experiences 1/- Of the 49 men who had several varied working experiences (four or more different jobs, some of which were farm work and others which were non-farm work), very few of these respondents (less than one-fifth) said that they relied only on talking with other people and/or using mass media as their ways of usually getting farming information. The majority (81.2 per cent) said that they use at least three, and in some cases all four of the main ways. These respondents talk with other people, use mass media, observe other farms and many also attend meetings.

In contrast, of the 151 respondents who had only two or three work experiences (which were chiefly farm work), slightly more than two-fifths of these men rely on only two or fewer ways of usually getting farming information, while only about three-fifths (57.1 per cent) take advantage of three or four of the possible ways.

These differences are at the 99 level of significance.

The Age and Education of the Farm Operator 2/- When the age of the respondents was examined in relation to their usual ways of getting farming

- 1/ For a more complete description of the number and type of working experiences, see report No. 3, pps. 3 and 4. Over one-third of the respondents (37 per cent) had only two work experiences, the first one having been that of working on their fathers' farms as young men and the second being the operator of their own farms. Other respondents reported having had from three to seven work experiences which, in most cases, included both farm and non-farm work, and in some cases military service. The average number of work experiences for all respondents in the study was three.
- 2/ The average age of the respondents was approximately 45 years. The average number of grades in school that had been completed was between seven and eight. A significantly higher proportion of the farm operators who were less than 50 years of age (compared with those of 50 or older) had completed eight or more years of formal schooling.

information, no significant association was found. However, there was a tendency for farmers who were 50 years of age or older to confine their usual ways of learning to mass media and talking with other people.

When education was examined in relation to farm operators' ways of usually getting information, a very significant relationship (at the 99 level) was found.

Of 132 respondents who had completed eight or more grades of schooling, 34.1 per cent of these men usually attend meetings as well as make use of the other three ways of getting information. On the other hand, of the 70 respondents who had completed seven or fewer grades of schooling, only 15.7 per cent of these men usually attend meetings as well as make some use of the other three ways of getting farming information.

Previous analysis had shown a strong tendency for young men to have completed more grades in school than had older men. For this reason, the interrelationship between a farm operator's age, his education and his usual ways of getting farming information was studied.

Use of two or fewer ways of usually getting farming information was found to the greatest extent among the 37 respondents who had seven or less grades of education and were 50 years of age or older. Over half of these respondents (54.1 per cent) said that they confined their usual sources of information to either talking with other people only or using this one way as well as using mass media. Two of these men said that they did not make use of any way of getting farming information.

Use of three ways of usually getting farming information was found to the greatest extent among 90 of the respondents who fell into two categories; either they were 40-49 years of age and had completed seven or less grades of school (there were 23 in this category) or they were 39 years of age or younger and had completed various grades of schooling (there were 67 in this category). The majority (44.5 per cent) of these 90 respondents said that they usually obtained farming information from talking with other people, making use of mass media and observing other farms.

Utilization of all four ways of usually getting farming information was found to the greatest extent among the 75 respondents who had eight or more years of schooling and were 40 years of age or older. Almost two-fifths of these men (38.6 per cent) said that they made some use of all four ways of gaining information.

These differences are at the 98 level of significance.

The Farm Operator's "Stage in the Life Cycle" 1/- Of 93 respondents who were in the first or second stages of the life cycle, over three-quarters, (76.3 per cent) of these men usually make use of three or four ways of getting farming information. Of the 109 respondents in the last three stages of the life cycle, only about half, (51.4 per cent) of these men make use of three or four ways of getting farming information.

These relationships held even when examined in relation to the respondent's age. The level of significance of these differences was 99.9.

Thus regardless of the age of the respondent, those who were: (a) living with their wives and had children of 15 years of age or older at home, (b) living with their wives who were over 40 years of age and had no children living at home and (c) those who were not living with a spouse, - almost half of these respondents tended to rely only on mass media and personal discussion as their ways of usually getting farming information.

The "Level of Living" of the Farm Operator and His Family 2/- Of 92 respondents who were classified as having a "high" level of living, 37.6 per cent of these men use all four of the main ways of usually getting farming information.

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1/ The term "life cycle" is a term used to describe the normal growth or stages through which most people and most families normally pass. The first stage of the family cycle is usually the young husband and wife with no children, then different stages are considered in relation to the number and age of children in the home. A later stage is when the couple are older and there are no children remaining in the home. Respondents who were unmarried or separated from their spouses are termed incomplete families for the purpose of this report. Among the respondents, 4.5 per cent were in the first stage of the family cycle (husband and wife of less than 40 years of age, with no children at home), 41.5 per cent were in the second stage (husband and wife with children of 14 years of age or younger at home), 32.7 per cent were in the third stage of the family cycle (husband and wife with children of 15 years of age or older at home), 6.4 per cent were in the fourth stage (husband and wife of over 40 years of age with no children at home). The remaining 14.9 per cent of the respondents were unmarried or not living with their spouses. These are classified as incomplete families and may be here considered as a fifth stage of the family life cycle.

2/ For further detail on the level of living as determined objectively by the presence or absence of 27 material possessions in the home, see report No. 2, especially p. 2 and pp. 18-20. The average level of living score of respondents in this study was 17 out of a possible 27. The respondents' level of living scores were classified either as low, a score of 0 to 9 (9.9 per cent of the respondents), as medium, a score of ten - 18 (44.6 per cent of the respondents), or as high, a score of 19 to 27 (45.5 per cent of the respondents).



Of 110 respondents who were classified as not having a high level of living, only 20.0 per cent of these men make use of all four of the main ways of usually getting farming information.

This difference was at the 99 level of significance.

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From this examination of seven easily recognized characteristics of farm operators, it may be stated that among the respondents, there is no demonstrable evidence that either nationality or length of residence on the farm bear any significant relationship to the usual ways in which farming information is obtained.

However, there is evidence that significant associations exist between the usual ways in which farming information is obtained and a farm operator's working experiences, his age and education, his family composition and his level of living as objectively measured.

Respondents who most fully utilize opportunities to increase their farming knowledge tend to be: those who had had four or more different working experiences including both farm and non-farm work; those who had eight or more grades of schooling and were about 40 years of age; married and living with a young wife with no children in the home or married and living with wife and young children (14 years of age or less); and those having a relatively high material standard of living.

Respondents who said that they do not habitually utilize all of the possible ways of increasing their farming knowledge tend to be: those who had a limited number and type of different working experiences (three or less and chiefly farm work); those who had seven or less grades of schooling and were 50 years of age or older; those who were not living with a spouse or children and also those who although living with their wives either had no children in the home (and the wife was 40 years of age or older) or had older children (of 15 years or more) living in the home; and those whose material level of living was classified as either medium or low.

### C. Individual Characteristics of the Farm Operator

It is not difficult to describe the sort of farm a man operates, nor is it hard to describe his appearance, - yet it sometimes is difficult to characterize people on a basis of how they think and behave. Individuals who seem alike in some ways think and behave very differently. For this reason, certain psychological and behaviour characteristics of the respondents have been examined in relation to the ways in which these men usually get information and new ideas about farming. These characteristics are:

### Psychological characteristics

1. The respondent's opinion of the size of the general farming area in which his farm is located.
2. His intentions about remaining or leaving farming as an occupation.
3. His intentions about making future changes in his farming enterprises.
4. His description of what the term "level of living" means to him.
5. His own rating of his family's particular level of living.

### Behaviour characteristics

6. The degree and nature of his contacts with other people (social participation).
7. The extent to which he visits other farmers for the purpose of discussing farming.
8. The extent to which he had recently received or passed on any new ideas on farming.
9. His contact with the local district agriculturist.

All except the first mentioned 1/ of these individual characteristics was found to be significantly related to the ways in which farming information is usually obtained by the respondents in this study.

Permanency of Occupation as a Farmer.- Nearly all (93.1 per cent) of the 202 respondents said that they intend to spend the rest of their lives farming. Of the 14 who were not sure of remaining in farming as an occupation, only 35.7 per cent said that they usually make use of three or more ways of getting farming information. Of the 188 respondents who intend to remain in farming, 64.9 per cent said that they make use of three or more ways of usually getting farming information.

This difference is significant at the 95 level.

1/ On being asked just what radius in miles was considered to be "their farming area", most farmers in the study answered that they considered their farming area to include farms within a radius of about five miles. Some farmers considered it to be only a radius of one mile, while a few said it was as great as 60 miles. However, in spite of whether the respondents considered their farming area to cover a small or a large territory, there was no definite proof that this opinion bore any significant relationship to their usual ways of getting farming information.

Intentions about making Future Changes in Farming Enterprises 1/-

Of the 162 respondents who either planned future changes or else felt that their farms were already satisfactorily organized and so need no changes, most of these people (93.2 per cent) said that they made some use of at least two or more different ways of getting farming information.

Among the 40 respondents who for a variety of reasons do not intend to make any future changes, a relatively smaller proportion (77.5 per cent) said that they made some use of at least two or more different ways of usually getting farming information. Thus almost one quarter of these people either confined their opportunity of getting farming information to one way only, talking with other people, or else they did not seek such information.

This difference is significant at the 99.9 level.

The Meaning of the Term "Level of Living" as Stated by the Respondents.-

This term "level of living" does not mean the same thing to everyone. Some of the respondents did not define it. Some said that it meant the material possessions which money can buy, such as food, clothing, shelter, an automobile and other items. Some said that it meant non-material things such as a happy family life, freedom of speech and religion and peace of mind. Other people said that it meant both material and non-material things.

The respondents' definitions of level of living were examined in relation to their usual ways of getting farming information.

Use of three or more of the main ways of usually getting farming information was reported by:

- (a) Only 26.7 per cent of the 15 respondents who did not define the term "level of living".
- (b) By 56.0 per cent of the 50 respondents who defined level of living primarily in non-materialistic terms.
- (c) By 69.3 per cent of the 137 respondents who defined level of living primarily in materialistic terms.

These differences are significant at the 99 level.

1/ Report No. 3 gives considerable detail about the nature of the changes which the respondents plan to make in their farming enterprises within a two or three-year period following June 1952. Over three-fifths of the respondents do propose to make an average of two changes in their farming enterprises. Most changes planned will involve increased production of beef cattle, hogs, dairy cattle and grain. About one-fifth of the respondents said that they did not need to make any future changes because their farms were "balanced", "satisfactorily organized" or simply "OK as is". The remaining respondents (approximately one-fifth) said that they did not plan any future farming changes, for a variety of reasons. In this report on the exchange of farming information, the emphasis is not on the particular farming changes which are proposed, but rather it is on characterizing the respondents in terms of their predisposition to make or not to make changes in their farming enterprises.



The Respondent's Own Rating of his Family's Level of Living 1/- Of the 46 respondents who either did not rate or else gave a low rating of their own family's level of living, less than half (47.8 per cent) of these men said that they usually make use of three or more ways of getting farming information.

Of the 156 respondents who rated their family's level of living at a medium or at a high level, 67.3 per cent of these men said that they usually make use of three or more ways of getting farming information.

This difference is significant at the 98 level.

Social Contacts with Other People (social participation).- As previously mentioned in this report, nearly all of the respondents said that they usually get some information about farming from talking with other people. Thus it was considered important to study the extent and degree of informal neighbourly visiting (informal social participation) as well as the degree to which the respondents belong to and take part in formal organizations and groups (formal social participation).2/

Informal Visiting.- Of the 60 respondents whose informal social visiting is solely with people who are not their relatives, almost all (96.7 per cent) of these respondents used two or more ways of usually getting farming information.

Of the other 142 respondents, a relatively smaller proportion (87.3 per cent) made use of two or more ways of usually getting farming information.

These differences are significant at the 95 level.

1/ After defining "level of living" each respondent was asked to indicate at which of five possible levels he would rate his own family. For purposes of analysis, these self ratings were categorized as a low level of living rating (16.8 per cent of the respondents), a medium rating (37.6 per cent) and a high rating (39.6 per cent). Six per cent of the respondents did not give a self rating.

2/ When informal visiting was considered, it was found that a few respondents (4.9 per cent) did not exchange visits with other people, some (21.8 per cent) visited only with their relatives, others (29.7 per cent) visited only with people who were not relatives, while the largest proportion (43.6 per cent) did some visiting with both relatives and persons unrelated to them. When formal social contacts were considered, it was found that some respondents (18.3 per cent) did not belong to any organizations, over one-third (39.5 per cent) belong to only one organization (the proportion of respondents belonging to only one type of organization was 27.2 per cent in a church organization, 6.9 per cent in a farm organization and 5.4 per cent in either a school, civic or veterans' organization). The majority of respondents (42.2 per cent) belonged to two or more different organizations which in most cases included both church and farm organizations. A future publication by Dr. Frank Uhler will deal specifically with an analysis of social participation and its implications. The publication will be based on data received from the same respondents considered in this present report.

**Formal Social Contacts Through Organizations.-** Use of two or fewer ways of usually getting farming information was found to the greatest extent among those 55 respondents who were active only in one organization, which was the church. Three-fifths (60.0 per cent) of these respondents said either that they used mass media and talked with other rural people, or confined their way of getting farming information to talking with other people. A few said that they did not seek farming information.

Use of three ways of getting farming information (talking with other rural people, using mass media and observing other farms) was found to the greatest extent among the 62 respondents who either did not belong to any formal organization or belonged to only one which was either a farm, school, civic or veterans' organization. Over half (51.6 per cent) of these respondents make use of three ways of getting farming information.

Utilization of all four ways of getting farming information was found to the greatest extent among the 85 respondents who belonged to two or more formal organizations. These organizations were of various kinds but most often included were those of a church and farm nature. Over two-fifths (43.5 per cent) of these respondents said that they got farming information from talking with other people, using mass media, observing other farms and attending informative meetings.

These differences are significant at the 99.9 level.

**Intensity of Social Contacts.-** When both informal and formal social participation was considered, it was found that 48 of the respondents could be classified as relatively high in terms of social participation. These people made numerous and frequent informal visits with other people and they also were active members of formal organizations. Of these "high participators", 77.1 per cent made use of three or more ways of usually getting farming information as contrasted with 58.4 per cent of all of the other respondents.

This difference is significant at the 97 level.

Visits to Other Farmers for the Purpose of Talking about Farming.- As well as discussing their general social participation, the respondents were asked if they occasionally visited other persons or families for the purpose of talking about farming. About two out of three respondents said that they did so and one out of three said that he did not.<sup>1/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> Additional analysis revealed that when a few persons (five or fewer) are visited, the respondents tend to visit each of these people four or more times a year. When several persons (six or more) are visited, each of these persons tends to be visited only three times a year or less often. Thus 46.6 per cent of the respondents did not deliberately visit other farmers to discuss farming; 24.8 per cent deliberately visited each of five or fewer people about four times a year to discuss farming and 38.6 per cent deliberately visited each of six or more people about three times a year to discuss farming.

Of the 123 respondents who said that they purposely visited other farmers to talk about farming, 33.6 per cent of these men made some use of all of the four main ways of usually getting farming information.

Of the 74 respondents who did not purposely visit other farmers to talk about farming, only 17.6 per cent of these men made some use of all of the four main ways of usually getting farming information.

This difference is significant at the 99 level.

Recent Exchange of New Ideas on Farming 1/- Of the 79 respondents who had neither received nor passed on any new ideas on farming within a short period preceding the study, the majority (51.9 per cent) said that they made use of only two or fewer ways of usually getting farming information.

Of the 55 respondents who had only received new ideas on farming, the majority (43.6 per cent) said that they made use of three of the ways of usually getting farming information.

Of the other 68 respondents (those who had just passed on ideas or had both received and passed on ideas), 39.7 per cent of these men said that they made some use of all of the four main ways of usually getting farming information.

These proportions are significant at the 99 level.

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1/ The respondents were asked whether they had either received or passed on any new ideas on farming within the year or so preceding the spring of 1952, when they were interviewed. Over one-third (39.1 per cent) said that recently they had neither received nor passed on any new ideas about farming; 27.2 per cent said they had received new ideas; 10.9 per cent said they had passed on new ideas and 21.8 per cent said that they had both received and passed on new ideas. Information was passed on to neighbours six times as often as it was passed on to other persons. The sort of information which was passed on concerned chiefly tillage methods, the growing of forage and other crops and least often the care of livestock. Information was received from other people just about as often as it was received from neighbours. The sort of information which was received concerned chiefly tillage methods, the handling of forage crops, the care of livestock and farm machinery. An interesting point here is that while the respondents had received new ideas from many different people, it was their neighbours to whom they most often passed on information.



Contact with the Local District Agriculturist 1/- Of 140 respondents who did not name their local district agriculturist as a source of help to them, the largest proportion of these respondents (47.9 per cent) said that they usually made use of only two or less of the four main ways of getting farming information.

Of the 13 respondents who said that they had some contact with their local district agriculturist but felt that this contact had not been helpful to them, the majority of these respondents (61.5 per cent) said that they usually made use of three of the four main ways of getting farming information.

Of the 49 respondents who said that they had helpful contacts with their local district agriculturist, the majority (59.2 per cent) said that they usually made some use of all four of the main ways of getting farming information. These differences are significant at the 99.9 level.

It is of interest to note that among the four respondents who said that they had no usual way of getting farming information, and among the 16 who said they got information only by talking with other people, not one of these 20 respondents said he had ever had any contact with his local district agriculturist. Yet officially the services of the agriculturist are equally available to all farmers.

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Some nine different psychological and behaviour characteristics of farm operators have been examined in relation to the way or ways in which these men usually obtain farming information.

Evidence has been found that all but one of these characteristics are associated with a tendency to seek farming information in different ways. There is no indication that a farm operator's conception of the size of

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1/ In the province of Alberta, over 50 men with both technical and practical training in agriculture are employed by the Department of Agriculture. These men, called District Agriculturists, are located in various rural areas throughout Alberta where they are in daily contact with farmers and other rural people. The district agriculturist passes on information and new ideas to farmers in his area. He also carries out certain specific policies and projects of the provincial Department of Agriculture. Farmers and district agriculturists can and do exchange information in various ways, such as through farm or office visits, at educational and other meetings, at short courses and field days, through the distribution of publications and films, by means of radio broadcasts and in other ways. In this study, any mention of the district agriculturist by a respondent was termed a contact with the local district agriculturist. Sixty nine per cent (140 respondents) did not mention any contact; approximately seven per cent (13 respondents) mentioned having had some contact but said that it had not been helpful. Almost one-quarter (24 per cent, 49 respondents) said that they had experienced one or more helpful contacts with their local district agriculturist.

"his farming area" is in any way associated with the way or ways in which he usually seeks farming information.

There is however significant evidence that persons who do or do not most fully utilize their opportunities to enlarge their farming knowledge think and behave differently in view of the following associations which in this study were found to exist: Intention to remain permanently in farming as an occupation and the use of three or more ways of usually getting farming information; intention to make future changes in farming enterprises and the use of two or more ways of usually getting farming information; a conception of "level of living" primarily in materialistic terms and the use of three or more ways of usually getting farming information; a self-rating of level of living at a medium or high level and the use of three or more ways of usually getting farming information; informal visiting carried on among persons who are not relatives and use of two or more sources of farming information; formal participation in two or more organizations and the use of all four of the main ways of getting farming information; a high intensity of social participation and use of three or more ways of getting farming information; purposeful visits to other farmers to discuss farming and use of all four of the main ways of getting farming information; recent reception and passing on of new ideas in farming and use of all four of the main ways of getting farming information; lastly, helpful contact with the local district agriculturist and use of all four of the main ways of usually getting farming information.

#### A Few Implications of These Findings

Considerable detailed evidence has been presented which supports the hypothesis that not only external circumstances but also human will and initiative govern a farmer's actions. The particular actions which have been analysed deal with the uses made of four possible ways of obtaining information and new ideas on farming.

There is little doubt that some farmers take advantage of every possible way of increasing their knowledge and skill in their occupation as farm operators. There is also little doubt that a great many farmers do not make use of all of the ways in which helpful information is available to them.

It has been pointed out that the farmers in this study differ in their ways of getting farming information and that people who use different ways of learning may be characterized in relation to certain aspects of the farms they operate, in certain of their personal observable characteristics and in certain aspects of their thinking and behaviour.

A pessimistic conclusion might be that people are different and cannot or will not change. However, all human history tells us that people can and do change.

A farmer who does not take advantage of opportunities to keep informed on new developments in agriculture may easily put himself at an economic and a social disadvantage; yet if he wants to expand his knowledge, he is completely free to do so in many possible ways.

A district agriculturist or other official agricultural worker who feels that conducting informative meetings is his primary and most efficient way of reaching many people with helpful information must surely realize that his audience is limited to the minority who choose to attend. There are many other ways in which his information and services may reach farmers in his area. An awareness of, and wholesome respect for, individual differences in the process of exchanging farming information can and should increase this spread of knowledge for the benefit of all concerned.

### THE EXCHANGE OF CURRENT 1/ PRICE INFORMATION

It has been pointed out that there are four main ways in which the respondents in this study usually get new ideas and information about farming. It has also been shown that certain external and personal characteristics are associated with farm operators who habitually make use of none, some or all of these ways of seeking information.

Knowing that farm operators behave differently in the process of acquiring and exchanging general farming information, it would seem relevant to examine farmers' behaviour in respect to a particularly important type of farming information - the farmer's awareness of current prices of farm products which are commonly sold in his part of the country.

The respondents were asked a series of questions about each of seven farm products: barley, oats, wheat, butterfat, hogs, beef cattle and eggs. Some of these questions were: What was last week's price for this product? Do you market this product? Where or how did you get this price information?

Awareness of Current Price Information.- Answers to this first question clearly indicate that current prices of common farm products are not all closely followed to the same extent by the respondents in this study.

Only 22 respondents (10.9 per cent) quoted a current price for all seven products. A few (1.5 per cent) did not quote a price for any of the products. The average number of products for which a price was quoted

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1/ The questionnaire was used in the study areas between the inclusive dates of June 6 to July 14, 1952. Current prices were thus defined as "last week's price". Some respondents gave prices which were in effect on the day they were interviewed. These answers were included as current price information.



was approximately four (4.35). 1/

There was no one product for which all respondents were able to quote a current price. The proportion of farm operators quoting a current price for each of the seven products is given in Table 2.

Table 2.- Awareness of Current Prices for Seven Common Farm Products  
Farm Operators in Mixed Farming Areas of Central Alberta,  
June, July 1952

Farm product	Proportion of farm operators			
	Quoting a	Not quoting a	Total	
	current price	current price	Per cent	Total
	- per cent -			
Hogs	82.7	17.3	100.0	202
Beef cattle	76.8	23.2	100.0	202
Butterfat	65.4	34.6	100.0	202
Barley	54.9	45.1	100.0	202
Eggs	54.5	45.5	100.0	202
Oats	47.0	53.0	100.0	202
Wheat	42.6	57.4	100.0	202

Various qualities, grades and marketing arrangements operate to establish a series of current prices for most agricultural products. This may be the main reason why considerable differences were found when the actual prices quoted for each of the seven products were examined.

No attempt has been made to classify the price answers given by respondents as "correct" quotations or otherwise. However, it is of interest to note the wide variation in the current prices as given by the respondents. These were:

Hogs	-from \$14.00 to \$32.50 per 100 lb., average price quoted was approx.	\$25.00
Beef cattle	- " \$16.50 to \$30.00 " " " " " "	\$24.00
Butterfat	- " \$ .30 to \$ .68 per lb. " " " " "	\$ .57
Barley	- " \$ .48 to \$ 1.40 " bushel " " " " "	\$ .88
Eggs	- " \$ .15 to \$ .40 " dozen " " " " "	\$ .32
Oats	- " \$ .20 to \$ 1.00 " bushel " " " " "	\$ .53
Wheat	- " \$ .90 to \$ 2.35 " bushel " " " " "	\$ 1.25

1/ Of the 202 respondents 1.5 per cent did not quote a price for any of the seven products, 4.0 per cent quoted a price for one product (which in most cases was beef cattle); 10.4 per cent quoted prices of two products (which in most cases were hogs and beef cattle); 17.3 per cent quoted prices for three products (which in most cases were hogs, beef cattle, and either butterfat or eggs); 20.8 per cent quoted prices for four products (which in most cases were hogs, beef cattle, butterfat and eggs); 18.3 per cent quoted prices for five products (which in most cases were hogs, oats, beef cattle, butterfat and barley); 16.8 per cent quoted prices for six products (which in most cases were hogs, barley, beef cattle, oats, butterfat and wheat); 10.9 per cent quoted prices for all seven of the products.

### Proportion of Farmers Marketing Each Product

In a mixed farming area, certain products such as grains are often marketed indirectly insofar as they serve as feed for livestock or poultry which are then sold.

The respondents were asked which of seven specific products were marketed in their original form. Over three quarters of the respondents replied that they did market hogs, beef cattle and butterfat. Half of the respondents marketed barley and eggs while less than half marketed wheat (45 per cent) and oats (36.1 per cent). Answers to this question on marketing were then examined in relation to whether the current price of the product was known by the respondent.

For all seven products, it was found that the largest proportion of respondents who marketed the product tended to know the current price and that (except for beef cattle) the largest proportion of these respondents who did not market the product did not tend to know the current price.

These relationships are clearly shown in Table 3.

### The Ways in which Current Prices of Farm Products were Obtained

The respondents who gave a current price for a farm product were asked where or how they got this particular information. Most frequently mentioned ways of getting price information were: Through selling or buying a product; by listening to price quotations on the radio; by reading price quotations in farm papers, daily papers or government circulars; and by asking friends, neighbours or relatives. A few farmers said that they had simply guessed at the prices they had given the interviewer.

The largest proportion of farmers who knew the prices of butterfat, eggs, wheat, oats and barley said that they had received this price information chiefly from actually selling or buying the product. The largest proportion of farmers who knew the prices of beef cattle and hogs, got this price information chiefly from listening to the radio.

The various ways in which respondents had received their information about the current prices of each of seven agricultural products is presented in Table 4.

Table 3.- Relationships Between Marketing of a Farm Product and Awareness of Current Prices, Farm Operators in Mixed Farming Areas of Central Alberta, June, July 1952

Fam product	Marketed product						Did not market product					
	Total : Knew :			Total : Knew :			Total : Knew :			Total : Knew :		
	: respondents :	price :	Did not know price :	: respondents :	price :	Did not know price :	: respondents :	price :	Did not know price :	: respondents :	price :	Did not know price :
- per cent -												
Hogs	83.7	75.3	8.4		16.3	7.4	8.9		100.0		202	
Beef cattle	77.7	63.4	14.3		22.3	13.4	8.9		100.0		202	
Butterfat	76.7	62.9	13.8		23.3	2.5	20.8		100.0		202	
Barley	50.0	35.6	14.4		50.0	19.3	30.7		100.0		202	
Eggs	50.5	42.6	7.9		49.5	11.9	37.6		100.0		202	
Oats	36.1	24.2	11.9		63.9	22.8	41.1		100.0		202	
Wheat	45.0	27.7	17.3		55.0	14.9	40.1		100.0		202	



Table 4.- The Ways in which Current Price Information had been Obtained for Seven Agricultural Products, Farm Operators in Mixed Farming Areas of Central Alberta, June, July 1952

How current price information: was obtained	:Percentage of respondents giving a current price for each product						
	:Butterfat:	Eggs:	Wheat:	Oats:	Barley:	Beef cattle:	Hogs
Selling or buying the product	84.8	69.1	47.7	46.3	41.5	14.2	22.7
Listening to radio	6.8	13.6	24.4	24.2	27.9	80.0	70.7
Reading price quotation in farm paper, or daily paper, or government publication	2.3	5.5	15.1	14.8	16.2	3.9	4.8
Talking with friends, neighbours or relatives	2.3	5.5	7.0	5.2	5.4	1.9	1.2
Guessed at price	3.0	6.3	3.5	7.4	5.4	0.0	0.0
Did not answer the question	0.8	0.0	2.3	2.1	3.6	0.0	0.6
Total respondents, per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number a/	132	110	86	95	111	155	167

a/ This number represents those respondents who had given a current price for each product. Respondents who did not give a price quotation are not included in this table.

#### Ways of Getting Current Price Information as Related to Knowledge of Prices and Marketing of a Product

As has been mentioned in Table 3, there was a strong tendency for current price information to be known by those respondents who marketed a particular product. Conversely persons who did not know current prices tended to be those who did not market the product.

However a few respondents did not know current prices even though they were selling these particular products and other respondents did know current prices of products which they were not selling.

These findings would suggest that, in general, persons who market a certain farm product tend to get their price information chiefly through the selling process and that persons who do not market a farm product tend to get their price information in a variety of other ways such as through the radio, the press, buying the product and from talking with other rural people.

By examining, for each farm product, the relationships between ways in which current price information was obtained, knowledge of current prices and marketing of a product, the following associations <sup>1/</sup> were found to exist:

<sup>1/</sup> All of these associations were tested for statistical significance. A level of 95 or more is accepted and reported as a statistically significant relationship.

Butterfat.- Of the 202 respondents in the study, the majority (132) did quote a current price for this product. Nearly all (96.5 per cent) who gave a current price did market butterfat.

Almost nine-tenths (88.2 per cent) of the respondents who quoted a current price and also marketed butterfat had received their price information through selling this product. Next most mentioned sources of information were the radio and talking with other rural people.

Among the few respondents who quoted a current price, even though they did not market butterfat, the majority (60 per cent) had received their price information from farm papers or government circulars. The others had received their information from either the radio or their friends.

These relationships are significant at the 99.9 level.

Eggs.- Of the 202 respondents, the majority (110) did quote a current price for this product. Over three-quarters (78.2 per cent) of those who gave a current price did market eggs.

About eight-tenths (81.4 per cent) of the respondents who quoted a current price and also marketed eggs, had received their price information through selling this product. Next most mentioned were the radio, newspapers and farm papers and family members. A few (3.5 per cent) said that they had guessed at the price they quoted.

Among the respondents who quoted a current price, even though they did not market eggs, the largest proportion (29.2 per cent) had received their price information from the radio. Next most frequently mentioned sources of information were through buying eggs, from talking with other rural people, and from newspapers and farm papers. A considerable proportion (16.7 per cent) said that they had guessed at current egg prices.

These relationships are significant at the 99.9 level.

Wheat.- Of the 202 respondents, only 86 quoted a current price for this product. Only about two-thirds (65.1 per cent) who gave a current price did market wheat.

Almost three-fifths (58.9 per cent) of the respondents who quoted a current price and also marketed wheat had received their price information through selling this product. Next most frequently mentioned were radio, farm papers or government circulars, and talking with other rural people.

Among the respondents who quoted a current price, even though they did not market wheat, the largest proportion (30.0 per cent) had received their price information from the radio. Next most mentioned were through buying the product, reading farm papers and talking with other rural people.

These relationships are significant at the 97 level.

Oats.- Of the 202 respondents, less than half (95) quoted a current price for this product. About half (51.6 per cent) of those who gave a

current price did market oats.

Over three-fifths (63.3 per cent) of the respondents who quoted a current price and also marketed oats had received their price information through selling this product. Next most mentioned sources of information were the radio, farm papers or government circulars, and talking with other rural people.

Among the respondents who quoted a current price, even though they did not market oats, the largest proportion (32.6 per cent) had received their price information from the radio. Next most mentioned sources of information were through buying the product, reading farm papers or government circulars or daily papers, and from talking with other rural people.

These relationships are significant at the 97 level.

Barley.- Of the 202 respondents, over one half (111) quoted a current price for this product. Almost two-thirds (64.9 per cent) who gave a current price did market barley.

Over half (52.8 per cent) of the respondents who quoted a current price and also marketed barley, had received their price information through selling this product. Next most mentioned sources of information were the radio, farm papers or government circulars and talking with other rural people.

Among the respondents who quoted a current price, even though they did not market barley, the largest proportion (41.0 per cent) had received this price information from the radio. Next most mentioned were through buying the product, farm papers or government circulars or daily papers, and talking with other rural people.

These relationships are significant at the 99 level.

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For these five products, significant relationships have been found which make it possible to make the following generalization concerning farm operators in two mixed farming areas of central Alberta.

Those farm operators who market butterfat, eggs, wheat, oats and barley tend to be aware of current prices of these products and to have obtained this price information through the actual selling process. The farm operators who do not market these five products do not generally tend to be aware of current prices. However, those men who do not market these products and yet are aware of current prices, tend to obtain their price information chiefly through the radio, secondly through buying the product, thirdly through farm papers or daily newspapers or government circulars and lastly talking with other people.<sup>1/</sup>

<sup>1/</sup> The relative importance of differing ways of getting information about current prices for these products were: (a) among respondents marketing the product: the selling process, eight persons out of ten, the radio one person out of ten, the press one person out of ten and very few (only about two out of 100) talking with other rural people. (b) Among respondents who did not market the product: radio four persons out of ten, the buying process three persons out of ten, the press two persons out of ten and talking with other rural people one person out of ten.



Beef cattle.- Of the 202 respondents, over three-quarters of them (155) quoted a current price for this product. Over eight-tenths (82.6 per cent) who gave a current price did market beef cattle.

However, regardless of whether beef cattle were marketed or not by the respondent, the information on current prices had been chiefly obtained through the radio. This was found for eight-tenths of those who did market beef cattle and for about three-quarters of those who did not market beef cattle. The next most mentioned source of price information was through the selling or buying process. A few respondents said that they had received price information from farm papers or newspapers or government circulars and a very few had received their price information from other rural people.

Thus no significant relationship was found to exist between the way in which current price information was obtained and whether or not the respondent marketed beef cattle. The chief source of price information was the radio whether or not beef cattle were actually being marketed.

Hogs.- Of the 202 respondents, over eight-tenths of them (167) quoted a current price for this product. The vast majority (91 per cent) who gave a current price did market hogs.

However, regardless of whether hogs were marketed or not, the information on current prices had been chiefly obtained through the radio. This was found for seven-tenths of those who marketed hogs and for eight-tenths of those who did not market hogs. The next most mentioned source of price information was through the selling or buying process. A few respondents said that they received this price information from farm papers or newspapers or government circulars and a very few had received their price information from other rural people.

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Thus no significant relationships were found to exist between the ways in which current price information was obtained and whether or not the respondent marketed either beef cattle or hogs. The chief source of price information for these two products was the radio, whether or not marketing actually was being carried on.

#### A Few Observations Concerning the Exchange of Current Price Information

Current prices are not all closely followed to the same extent by farm operators. In this study, out of every 100 farmers in two mixed farming areas of Alberta, approximately 87 were aware of current prices for hogs, 77 for beef cattle, 65 for butterfat, 55 for each of barley and eggs, 47 for oats and 43 for wheat.

For all seven of these agricultural products, it tended to be those farmers actually marketing each product who were aware of current prices. Except in the case of beef cattle, the largest proportion of respondents who did not market each product tended to be those people who were not aware of the current prices.

The manner in which this current price information had been obtained depended, for most products (butterfat, eggs, wheat, oats and barley) on whether or not these were actually marketed by the respondents.

Among those who marketed these particular products, eight out of every 10 had received the current price information through the actual process of selling the product, one out of ten from listening to the radio, one out of ten from the press and almost none (two out of 100) from asking other rural people.

Among those who did not market those particular products and yet knew current prices, four out of every ten people had obtained this information from listening to the radio, three out of ten from buying the products, two out of ten from the press, and one out of ten from talking with other rural people.

However, current price information for both hogs and butterfat had been chiefly obtained from the radio. This was true whether or not the respondents marketed these two products.

It has been previously found <sup>1/</sup> that much of the future change in agriculture in the study areas will involve increased hog and beef cattle production. It is strongly suggested that the radio is the chief means of communication used by farm operators when changes in their pattern of agricultural production are being seriously considered.

This observation is born out by the finding that there is less awareness of current prices of those enterprises which form the habitual pattern of agricultural production.

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This report is based on data provided in personal interviews with a representative sample of all of the 1,215 farm operators in two of the census sub-divisions in the mixed farming region of Central Alberta.

Since this is a factual report, it is necessary to go into details which in turn makes it impossible to provide quick, easy answers. A conscious effort has been made to write this report simply. However this does not mean that this is a simple report. There is nothing simple about human behaviour.

The exchange of farming information is a continuous process. New knowledge is being gained from research carried on by individual farmers, experimental stations, scientists and others. This knowledge is made available to the farm operator in several different ways.

The main ways in which farmers usually get farming information may be summarized as, (1) talking with other rural people, (2) making use of mass media, (the press and radio), (3) observing other farms and (4) attending informative meetings.

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<sup>1/</sup> See report No. 3 especially p. 22 dealing with "Conclusions concerning future pattern of agricultural production in the study areas".

These ways of usually getting farming information are not all used to the same extent by individual farmers. Many of the relevant characteristics associated with respondents who make use of different ways of getting farming information have been described.

An examination of these associations provides food for thought to all concerned with agriculture.

A farmer reading this report might remember that evidence has been presented which shows that productive and efficient farms are operated by the respondents who had achieved for themselves a relatively high level of living and further that most of these respondents habitually take advantage of all of the four main ways of getting farming information.

A professional agricultural worker might remember that evidence has been presented which shows that practically all farmers obtain some farming information by personally talking with other people and further that these people are most often the farmer's wife, sons or neighbours.

Thus the exchange of farming information is not only continuous but it is most active on a local basis. Local, in view of the fact that it is the family and neighbours with whom farming discussions are most often carried on. Local in view of the fact that most farmers consider farms within a radius of only about five miles to be a part of their own farming area.









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